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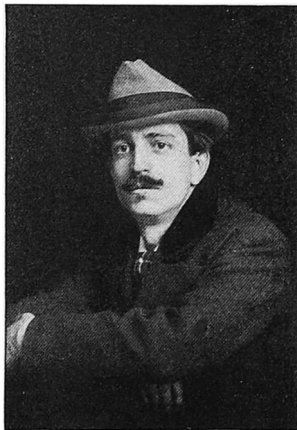
"Divine instinct, breadth or vision, the law of reason, health, rudeness of body, withdrawal, gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness"—these exhilarating contributions of the psychic comprehension will permeate the life that has become creatively an art, will give to every soul the genuine "angels' wings," and make of every man an "Answerer" to his brother.

LAURA MCADOO TRIGGS.



ALEXIS J. FOURNIER

Alexis Fournier was born at St. Paul, Minnesota, July 4, 1865. His parents were French. His father was a millwright, and a man of considerable mechanical skill. Fournier received a common-school education, and at the age of fifteen years, finding himself with an ambition to accomplish something with brush and color, he found employment in the Minneapolis Sign Shop. The work was not agreeable to him, as it afforded no opportunity for the development of his taste, nor the expression of his ideas and feelings. He had early resolved to consecrate himself to a career of the fine arts, and with this end in view he longed for employment more congenial. After a brief career of sign-painting, an opportunity to assist at scene-painting presented itself, and he embraced it most willingly. Here his talent made itself manifest. He labored incessantly, putting into his daily work dashes of realism and truth foreign to scenic art. In his leisure hours, during the spring and summer evenings, he was constantly out of doors, seeking to familiarize himself with the objects about him. He fairly reveled in nature, making pilgrimages into the forests, fields, and to the lakeside. The amount of work he performed during these rambles was simply phenomenal. Nothing escaped his attention, and it seemed as if every stone and leaf within the boundaries of his tours was familiar to him. He was always serious, always trying to understand and express in his pictures and sketches the impressions that nature gave him.



ALEXIS J. FOURNIER

In the spring of 1893 he went to Chicago to supervise the construction of the "Cliff-dwellers' exhibit." He had just returned from

an exploring tour with the H. J. Smith party, and his great capacity for work, even under the most trying circumstances, was again made manifest in the myriads of sketches he brought back with him. The artistic and realistic features and effects of this exhibit were entirely due to Fournier's efforts. In the fall of 1893, after the close of the Exposition, he decided to visit France for the purpose of studying under some of the great masters. This had long been his most ardent



THE SHEPHERD'S RETURN, BY ALEXIS J. FOURNIER

desire. He took with him a few of his earliest pictures, and one of these, "A Spring Morning near Minnehaha Creek," was exhibited in the Salon of 1894. It was handled in a strikingly original manner, and it proved a revelation to the artists of the Latin Quarter. He began his studies abroad at the Julian Academy in Paris, under Jean Paul Laurens, Benjamin Constant, Gustav Courtois, and Henrie Harpignies. While looking at some of Fournier's pictures, Harpignies turned to him, and said: "My friend, I am glad to have seen these things. They will be better soon, but you show to me that you are a very hard and serious worker, and in many ways most original: I don't know what further to say to you, except to advise you to go

ahead and work. You are in the right mood. Let me see you again, for I shall always be glad to have you visit me, you know that."

Of his last painting exhibited in the Salon, and which was hung next to a Gérôme, the *Figaro*, commenting on its merits, said that it was one of the best paintings in the room.

Benjamin Constant, visiting the Salon on a certain varnishing day, espied Fournier, and in a most friendly spirit greeted him, remarking, "Ah, you have a picture here; come show it to me." Upon seeing it,



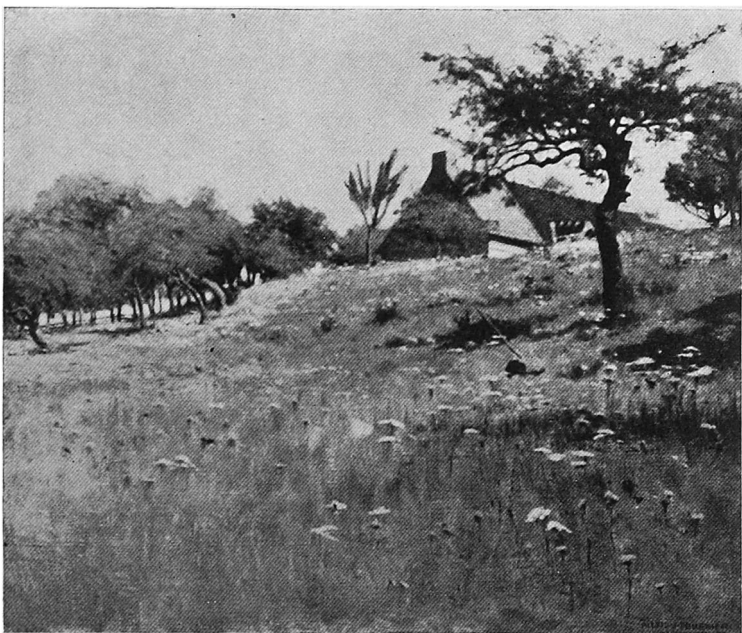
WHEN GOLDEN EVENING FADES, BY ALEXIS J. FOURNIER

he inquired: "What is the title? 'A Spring Morning'? Yes, it is a spring morning, and no mistake. Indeed, you have good lines in it, and good feeling, too. In fact, it is a fine picture. Keep right on, for you understand nature, I see that. Bon courage." Alexander Harrison also bestowed great praise upon the same picture, saying to his friends, "That fellow sees it right; you will hear from him."

Fournier has given his whole attention and directed his best efforts to the painting of landscape, and sheep, and pure landscape. He is trying to portray nature as it impresses him, and above all things to be true to himself. He believes the mission of a painter of out-of-doors is to show nature in her fine moods, her harmony and music, as it were. He admires technique, and he recognizes that painting in

itself is mechanical, almost a trade; but fine art only when it appeals to our æsthetic natures and our sense of the beautiful, exerting an elevating influence on mind and character.

After an absence of fifteen months Fournier returned to Minnesota again, and took up his abode in a pretty little cottage which he designed and built in a cluster of trees near a running creek which



OLD ORCHARD, NORMANDIE, BY ALEXIS J. FOURNIER

supplies the waters of Minnehaha Falls, five miles distant. He brought back with him many interesting canvases, representing French and Italian scenes. His picture of "Venice" found a quick sale, and a small pastoral scene was willingly purchased at a good price. In all his work Fournier shows that he has a clear and high perception of what is required of an artist, and he has the courage of his convictions. He is not a painter of ideal scenery, but a painter of nature, interpreting her moods with true poetic feeling. She has taken him into her confidence. He listens rapturously to her voice; he is in sympathy with her moods and caprices, and her influence is ever manifest in his art. Fournier works at his best independently,

never seeking picturesque effects at the sacrifice of truth, nor has he ever condescended to meet the popular demand for inartistic stuff. To accuse him of helping to debauch the public taste would indeed be a slander. He aims to be one of the few artists who persistently strive to elevate the standard of American art and the public taste for it. Thankless as is this task, he has faith in its ultimate accomplishment.

In the early spring of 1898 he visited Boston, and exhibited a collection of his pictures in the gallery of J. Eastman Chase. He was well received, the critics bestowing great praise upon his work, pronouncing it uniformly good, of even quality, soundly and skillfully painted, and in style free, supple, and firm. Following the close of this exhibit, he once more sailed for France, this time to attain a greater degree of perfection by serious study in an atmosphere conducive to the highest development of art. Believing that no rule can be established which may guide him in the expression of his feelings, he avoided the Academy and worked independently. Naturally timid and diffident, he has been unable to harden himself against the rude criticisms of vulgar minds that ridicule and caricature what they cannot comprehend. In France, where he is at leisure to employ his full time, he feels himself more powerfully excited to emulation by study of the works of great masters and gaining hope and confidence from the intelligent criticism of his fellow artists. The fears with which his imagination is crowded disappear under such conditions, and his best work is then accomplished. The twenty canvases he brought back with him in the fall of 1898 are conclusive evidence of this fact. They show no inconsistencies to which painters are exposed by departure from truth.

Fournier's ability is well recognized by the few art-lovers in the Twin Cities, who are justly proud of his achievements.

He is a member of the American Art Association, the Society of Western Artists, and the founder of the Minneapolis Art League.

E. J. ROSE.

